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ABSTRACT

This document describes curriculum and resources designed to foster and expand the philosophical thinking of elementary and middle school students. The booklet begins with excerpts from and a discussion of Matthew Lipman's novel "Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery," written to help elementary and middle school students discover both formal and informal rules of thought. Lipman and his associates established the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State College (New Jersey) in 1974. Subsequent chapters describe the successes and problems of the IAPC programs. The Institute continues to develop curricula designed to expand reasoning skills, beginning in early childhood education with reasoning in language comprehension and followed by reasoning skills in ethics, language arts, and social studies. It also conducts workshops to prepare teachers and teacher trainers in the use of the materials. Also discussed in the booklet are the philosophical foundations of philosophy for children and the significance of dialogue in teaching philosophy to children. The booklet concludes with an annotated listing of IAPC curriculum materials and a bibliography. (RM)

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# Philosophy for Children: An Approach to Critical Thinking

Tony W. Johnson

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# Philosophy for Children: An Approach to Critical Thinking

by
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## Who Is Harry Stottlemeier And What Did He Discover?

Harry Stottlemeier is a fifth-grader whose mind wanders one day in Mr. Bradley's science class. After listening to Mr. Bradley explain the intricacies of the solar system, Harry begins to "picture in his mind . . . the great, flaming sun, and all the little planets spinning steadily around it." Suddenly the teacher asks him a question: "What is it that has a long tail, and revolves about the sun once every 77 years?" Not knowing the answer, Harry tries to figure out an answer. Knowing that all planets revolve about the sun, Harry reasons that this thing with a tail that revolves around the sun must be a planet.

His answer is greeted with laughter, since everyone else had heard Mr. Bradley say that comets (in this case Halley's comet) revolve around the sun just as planets do but are not planets. Embarrassed by the reaction of his classmates and upset for failing to answer the question, Harry wonders what went wrong. Thinking about what happened, Harry realizes that he erred in assuming that since all planets revolve around the sun, all things that revolve around the sun are planets.

Excited about this new discovery that "all" sentences can't be reversed, Harry hastens to tell Lisa about it. Lisa is one of his classmates, but she was not among those who laughed at him. With Lisa's help further discoveries are made, including a revision of his initial discovery. Together they conclude that if a true sentence begins with the word *no*, then its reverse is also true; but if it begins with the word *all*, then its reverse is false.

Elated over his and Lisa's discoveries, Harry runs home to find his

mother and a neighbor, Mrs. Olsen, engaged in the following conversation:

> Mrs. Olson was saying, "Let me tell you something, Mrs. Stottlemeier. That Mrs. Bates, who just joined the PTA, every day I see her go into the liquor store. Now, you know how concerned I am about those unfortunate people who just can't stop drinking. Every day, I see them go into the liquor store. Well, that makes me wonder whether Mrs. Bates is, you know . . ."
>
> "Whether Mrs. Bates is like them?" Harry's mother asked politely.
>
> Mrs. Olson nodded. Suddenly something in Harry's mind went "CLICK!"
>
> "Mrs. Olson," he said, "just because, according to you, *all people who can't stop drinking* are *people who go to the liquor store*, that doesn't mean that *all people who go to the liquor store* are *people who can't stop drinking*."
>
> "Harry," said his mother, "this is none of your business, and besides, you're interrupting."
>
> But Harry could tell by the expression on his mother's face that she was pleased with what he'd said. So he quietly got his glass of milk and sat down to drink it, feeling happier than he had felt in days.

The above excerpts from the first chapter of Matthew Lipman's novel *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* clearly identify Harry as a sensitive and imaginative character who struggles to figure things out. Caught in the act of daydreaming, he unsuccessfully attempts to reason his way out of his predicament. Experiencing embarrassment as a result of his failure, he turns his reasoning inward and tries to figure out his mistake. Through such reflection, along with a little help from his friends, he begins to unravel the mysteries of thought and subsequently to apply his discoveries to his everyday world.

The novel is designed to encourage elementary and middle school students to think about thinking. As the characters in *Harry* and the other novels in the series discover both formal and informal rules of thought, students in the classroom are encouraged and assisted in improving their thinking skills. As students discuss ideas introduced by characters in the novels, they begin to think about their own thinking and become concerned about improving it.

In the 1960s, aware of his college students' inability to understand and follow the rules of reason, Matthew Lipman, professor of

philosophy at Columbia University, began exploring alternative ways of teaching reasoning. Realizing that students need help in developing their reasoning skills long before their college years, someone suggested to Lipman the possibility of introducing children to both the formal and informal rules of thought by using the novel as a medium. Intrigued by the potential of a story, told as a child might tell it, for modeling the discovery of the rules of reason, Lipman wrote *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* and, with the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, taught it to fifth-graders at the Rand School in Montclair, New Jersey, in 1970-71.

On his initial meeting with the students, he read Chapter 1 and then asked: "What did Harry discover?" Expecting halting, fumbling replies at best, Lipman was astonished when the very first response was lucid and complete. Virtually everyone in the class did remarkably well. Lipman soon learned that the students preferred taking turns reading a chapter aloud and took delight in role playing the characters whenever appropriate. With the students' help, deficiencies in the novel were identified and appropriate revisions made. Later, Lipman received another NEH grant, which enabled him to develop a teacher's manual for *Harry* and to write another novel for more advanced students.

Lipman and his associates established the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State College in 1974, pioneering the development of curriculum materials and teaching methods designed to enhance the thinking skills of elementary and middle school students. The IAPC continues to engage in research and to prepare teachers and teacher trainers in the use of the materials. The research and teacher education activities of IAPC are discussed in subsequent chapters, and a description of the curriculum materials available from the IAPC is provided on page 35.

The IAPC has developed a curriculum designed to foster and expand reasoning skills, beginning with early childhood focusing on reasoning in language comprehension and followed by reasoning skills in ethics, language arts, and social studies. The curricula are not watered-down, introductory college-level courses, nor do they attempt to teach children the history of philosophy or technical jargon. The program encourages children to examine alternative ways of viewing things and assists them

in discovering and applying the rules of reason to questions of significance to them.

Most educators agree that the thinking skills of our students are in need of improvement, but why philosophy for children? After all, the development of reasoning skills has long been a function of education. In the past, such efforts focused on mathematical or scientific training, with the assumption that the rigor of such subjects would discipline the mind sufficiently to enable children to draw logical inferences from what they hear or read. Today numerous curriculum kits designed to develop particular reasoning skills are available. But whether one uses traditional methods or more modern materials, students who are taught reasoning in the abstract are unlikely to transfer those skills to their daily lives. Only by appreciating the significance that thinking about thinking has for their lives will students engage in self-reflection and begin to internalize the rules of reason.

The rules of reason are numerous, but children are capable of learning them. Since they enter the classroom capable of communicating, they already possess considerable reasoning skills. But like everyone else they can improve these skills.

To foster the development of such skills, the philosophy for children program uses characters in novels to model the discovery of both formal and informal rules of thought. In these novels, Harry and his friends struggle to figure things out. Formal logic is one of the tools used in this quest but, as the children discover, it is not enough. The rules of formal logic tell us nothing about the truth of a particular assertion. In such situations one must search for evidence or good reasons to support or deny the assertions. Although no absolute rule dictates what constitutes a good reason, a reason given in support of an assertion should be factual, relevant, and plausible.

The children in the novels struggle to figure things out by seeking reasons for things they do not understand and by assessing the reasons given them. The following excerpt from Chapter 15 of *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* illustrates not only a meaningful dialogue between father and son, but also a child's persistence in trying to figure things out that puzzle him. Harry and his father are walking home from the store when Mr. Stottlemeier lights a cigar:

"Dad," said Harry, "why do you smoke?"

"Because I like to," Mr. Stottlemeier replied.

"But they say that smoking causes cancer," Harry insisted.

"Only if you smoke too much," answered Harry's father.

"I don't see how you can be sure you're not smoking too much," said Harry. "Besides, I tried taking a puff of your cigar, and it tasted awful."

"Well," said Mr. Stottlemeier, "that's good. Maybe you won't pick up the habit that way."

"Dad," said Harry, after a few moments, "you said you smoke because you like to. But did you like to at first?"

"I don't remember, it was a long time ago. It seems to me I didn't like it much at first, but then I kept on smoking and pretty soon I began to like it."

"How long ago was it?" Harry wanted to know. "When you were in high school?"

Harry's father laughed. "No, actually it was later. It was when I was in the Army."

"When you were overseas in Korea?"

Harry's father nodded. He very seldom seemed to want to talk about the time he was in the Army.

After a pause, Harry asked, "How do wars start, anyhow?"

"Oh," said Mr. Stottlemeier, "You know how it is. People hate each other, and the first thing you know, they're fighting."

"Did you hate the Koreans?"

"You mean the *North* Koreans," said Mr. Stottlemeier. "We were fighting *against* the North Koreans, but *with* the South Koreans. To tell you the truth, I could never see much difference between them."

"No, I don't think I did," his father replied. "Maybe now and then I did, toward the end, but not at first."

Harry looked puzzled. "Dad," he said finally, "you said before that first people get mad at each other and then they fight. But in your case it worked the other way around. You were fighting the war, and only later you got mad. How come?"

"I don't know how come, Harry," said Mr. Stottlemeier. "I never really thought of it that way. I don't know how come."

They stopped at a street corner and waited for the traffic light to change.

"Dad," Harry said, as they were crossing the street, "I hate to be a pest – "

"But you've got another question!" Harry's father laughed. "Well, what is it? Pester away!"

"I was thinking – you said that you smoke because you like to. But you also said that when you first started, while you were in the Army, you were smoking before you liked it. I don't get it."

"What do you mean?" his father asked.

"I mean, what came first, the smoking or the like to smoke?"

"The smoking."

"That's what I thought," said Harry.

As the chapter develops, Harry and his friends discover the difference between a cause and a reason. As the chapter concludes, Harry becomes a trifle annoyed with his father for giving him the cause – not the reason for his smoking. Harry also discovers that while the rules of formal logic are important, the search for good reasons is equally important.

A grasp of these and other rules of reason is important if children are to learn to think about their own thinking. To internalize these rules, children must be actively involved in exploring problems that have meaning for them. One learns philosophy by doing philosophy.

The novels used in the philosophy for children program provide students with examples of problems that have meaning for them, as well as presenting a model of a community of peers seeking solutions to common problems. As students begin to identify with the characters in the novels, they begin to discover the rules of reason and, more importantly, to turn these new reasoning skills inward to examine their own thoughts and actions.

# The Philosophical Foundations of Philosophy for Children

Children naturally enjoy and engage in the art of philosophizing. This should not be surprising because, after all, what is philosophy, stripped of its technical jargon and academic erudition, but an uncommonly stubborn attempt to think clearly? Who among us has not experienced a child's persistence in repeatedly asking "Why?" Such inquisitiveness is the child's main instrument for making sense out of the world.

However, long before such inquisitive children reach adulthood, they all too often have been socialized to abandon this sense of wonder. Time after time, well-meaning adults, including some teachers, squelch a child's natural inquisitiveness. Since many adults have stopped wondering why things are the way they are, they often ignore and sometimes belittle children for seeking explanations for things they do not readily understand. Adults sometimes fail to realize that a child's experience and understanding are limited. For children, much of what adults take for granted is new and puzzling. Given the paucity of their experiences, it is understandable that they wonder about their world.

Something is wonderful when our knowledge or understanding fails to explain it. In this sense, to wonder is a necessary step in the expansion of knowledge and understanding. To achieve greater understanding, the child's sense of wonder, his natural inquisitiveness, must be fostered. Children should be encouraged to think for themselves, rather than having others think for them. Rather than compelling children to accept uncritically the world as perceived by adults, educators should encourage

and assist children in their struggle to discover and make sense out of a wonderful world.

Children are natural born philosophers. They have the ability to learn logic and other reasoning skills. As Frederick Oscanyan has noted, children have already developed rather sophisticated reasoning skills prior to entering school. According to Oscanyan (1978), children understand the meaning of if-then logical forms, though they may know nothing of the formal rules that govern these forms. For example, children understand that the statement, "If you touch that, you will get hurt," means to avoid getting hurt (denying the consequence) necessitates not touching the specified object (denying the antecedent). While children may not understand the rules that govern such logical patterns, they understand the patterns because they connect with what they do. It is not possible to determine the exact moment a child begins to reason, but it is obvious that children are making inferences prior to their use of language. It is the intent of the philosophy for children program to enhance the child's natural reasoning abilities by assisting the child in the discovery of the rules of reason and their application.

While relatively young children possess the ability to reason, it is not assumed that their powers of reason will develop naturally. While children seem inclined to seek understanding, to search for meaning and truth, such inclinations need nurturing if they are to prevail. While the philosophy for children program assumes that thinking is natural, it also believes that it can be enhanced. The program aims at improving the child's natural rational powers, to transform thinking into thinking well.

Thinking well requires self-reflection, and self-reflection is encouraged through dialogue among a community of peers seeking solutions to common problems. In order for children to engage in philosophical learning, an atmosphere must be created that fosters interaction between each individual child and the environment. Such an environment includes peers, teachers, and other adults, as well as the physical setting.

To encourage such interaction, the teacher must genuinely respect each child's opinions. If students sense that their task is to discover the right answers as determined by the teacher, they are not likely to risk an interpretation or offer an explanation that in any way differs from what

is expected. If philosophy is to be meaningful, the teacher must join students in seeking more meaningful explanations than they now possess to problems that interest them all. Such a teacher must recognize that knowledge is continually being created and expanded by humans in their never-ending quest for greater understanding. The philosophy for children program is significantly teacher dependent. If the model of an educated individual offered by the teacher is of a person who is all-knowing, students are not likely to engage in or value philosophical inquiry. If students are exposed to teachers who are intellectually open, curious, self-critical, and not afraid to say, "I don't know," the students' natural inclination to wonder is enhanced. The philosophy for children program assumes that commitment to open, honest inquiry, governed only by the rules of reason, should prevail in the classroom.

In using the philosophy for children materials, teachers must guard against imposing their own values on the impressionable minds of children. To impose a teacher's position on a child, no matter how confident the adult is in the correctness of the position, is indoctrination and antithetical to philosophical inquiry. However, although teachers must be careful not to interject their views into a classroom discussion too often, no content or method of teaching is value-free. While the philosophy for children program does not support indoctrination of any kind, neither does it accept the "everything is relative" attitude that is so fashionable today. Nor is the program akin to the varied values clarification techniques that recently have been popular. The philosophy for children program does more than just enable students to clarify and rank their values. By modeling for students the significance of coherence, consistency, and comprehensiveness in their thinking, the program seeks to assist students in learning how to think, not what to think. As students develop their thinking skills through the discovery and application of the rules of reason, they will be able to determine when and why one reason is better than another.

While developing the capacity to distinguish good reasoning from bad is important, the philosophy for children program is also concerned with fostering congruence between thought and action. Assuming that one's integrity is based on a consistency between thought and action, the novels offer models of children struggling with the inconsistencies

within their own being. Lisa, for example, loves roast chicken but is appalled by the thought of any animal, including chickens, being harmed or killed. She understands that her fondness for roast chicken conflicts with her concern for animal life, but mere awareness of this inconsistency is not sufficient for avoiding the horns of this dilemma.

Lisa's inner conflict illustrates another basic assumption on which the philosophy for children program is based. The children in the novels repeatedly discover that formal logic and the rules of reason are just tools to assist in distinguishing good thinking from bad. They offer no guarantees that complex problems can be solved by applying the rules. One who writes correctly obviously understands the rules of grammar, but understanding grammatical rules does not make one a good writer. In a similar fashion an awareness of the rules of reason does not necessarily make one a better thinker. That understanding must be turned inward and combined with imagination as children struggle to discover and create meaning in their world.

The philosophy for children program, unlike other efforts aimed at fostering reasoning skills, assumes that logic and creativity go hand in hand. Logic does not always suffice as a means of resolving complex human problems. Occasionally encouraging children to transcend the boundaries of reason and to use their imaginations helps them to conceptualize other possible worlds. While both formal logic and good reasons are essential to rationality, the rational powers of humans are many, and certainly imagination, creativity, and inventiveness are among them. By modeling for students the strengths and weaknesses of logic and the need to use it in connection with one's own creativity and inventiveness, the philosophy for children program offers a comprehensive approach to the development of reflective beings.

The development of inquisitive and reflective children is important; but there are other, more practical benefits. Children who have been encouraged to be more reflective and inquisitive tend to apply such behaviors to other learning activities. Teaching philosophy to children as a distinct discipline has a carry-over effect into other disciplines. Evidence in support of that assumption will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Certain prerequisites must exist for introducing philosophy to children at a relatively young age. Any teacher seeking to introduce

philosophy into the classroom must be committed to the basic principles of the program. The teacher must create an atmosphere where children manifest respect for one another. To do this, the teacher must respect the children as unique individuals capable of understanding and creating meaning in the world. Rather than indoctrination, a willingness to follow the rules of reason must prevail. Philosophy for children presupposes a commitment to open inquiry that must be shared by the teacher as well as by members of the class.

# The Community of Inquiry and the Significance of Dialogue

Central to the philosophy for children approach is the use of dialogue as a teaching strategy. The dialogue should be related to children's lives and to ideas that matter most to them. The dialogue tradition can be traced back to ancient Greece in the sixth century B.C., when philosophers began systematically to engage in thinking about thinking. It was at this time that the field of philosophy emerged, with literary forms serving as vehicles for presenting philosophical concepts. Whether in the aphorisms of Heraclitus, the poetry of Parmenides, or the dialogues of Plato, the literature of ancient times often contained philosophical material. By introducing it in this fashion, philosophical inquiry became more than just an academic or professional enterprise. Embodied in literary forms, philosophical inquiry was accessible to all educated persons.

Socrates, as portrayed in the dialogues of Plato, provides us with an excellent model of how discovery and understanding are enhanced through dialogue. Often conversing with young men, Socrates models a process of intellectual inquiry that is rigorous but never condescending. He never imposes on his companions the results of his own disciplined inquiry. Socrates demonstrates that thinking is hard work that no one can do for someone else. He models for his friends the difference between thinking and thinking well, and his enthusiasm for learning is contagious. Perhaps most significant is his ability to instill in these young men the confidence that they too can master the art of thinking well.

Socrates demands that his charges think, but more importantly he shows them how to think. He demonstrates that dialogue compels us to be on our toes intellectually. In such an activity there is no place for mindless banter or slovenly reasoning. When engaged in a serious conversation, listening is thinking because one needs to understand and then evaluate other points of view. Speaking is thinking for one must weigh carefully each word to ensure that it conveys the meaning that is desired. To engage in dialogue is to rehearse in our minds what others have said, to assess the relevance and significance of these remarks, to recognize other perspectives than our own, and to explore possibilities that heretofore were unknown to us. As Socrates demonstrates, genuine dialogue avoids indoctrination by holding all points of view, including one's own, to the same rigorous examination. Thinking, everyone's thinking, is subjected to the most rigorous test of logic and experience. To do this is not easy but, as Socrates demonstrates, the establishment of a community of inquiry enhances the cooperative search for greater understanding.

While Plato's dialogues are still appropriate for today's young adults, little philosophical discourse is presented today in dramatic form. In recent years philosophical discourse has become more technical and scientific, hence of interest only to the specialist, the academic philosopher. Yet what the Greeks discovered and Socrates modeled more than 2,000 years ago — that the unexamined life is not worth living — is as true today as it was then. Only by thinking can human beings gain understanding and meaning in this world. And as Socrates demonstrated in Plato's dramatic dialogues, conversations among participants in a community of inquiry stimulates thinking about thinking.

Establishing a community of inquiry is the most important ingredient necessary for fostering good thinking, but it is not enough. Children need something to think about if they are to be encouraged to think well, and unless they have access to literary materials that stimulate interest in philosophical ideas, they are not likely to develop or sustain a genuine community of inquiry.

In order to transform classrooms into communities of inquiry, children need a Socratic model to emulate that is appropriate to their level of maturity. They need to read and talk about children who, like

themselves, are struggling to figure things out. Children today need philosophical material presented in the form of a story if they are to be encouraged to be reflective. The philosophy for children novels meet that need. They offer students a model of a community of inquiry in action. Just as Socrates modeled a process of inquiry for his students and just as Plato's dialogue offers such a model for adults, the characters in the novels provide elementary and middle school students with appropriate models of both thinking and thinking well. While most students find the novels interesting, they are intended as pedagogical rather than literary works, designed to offer children and youth a substantive intellectual diet around which a sturdy and lasting community of inquiry can be built.

The ideas introduced in the novels are of universal interest and significance, but as pedagogical materials they are intended to stimulate genuine inquiry in the classroom. The ideas introduced in the novels serve as springboards for discussions of things that matter most to students. In such a community the discussion is more than just a question-and-answer session between the teacher and individual students. Ideally the conversation should be passed from student to student with the teacher participating as one of the group. In such a community all are committed, including the teacher, to follow reason wherever it may lead. In order for such a community to develop, students must be encouraged to volunteer pertinent personal experiences or to offer different interpretations or perspectives. Discussions should focus initially on ideas or events in the novel that are of interest to the students, but they should progress to other ideas and interests suggested by the novel. In a true community of inquiry, students learn to value their own thoughts as well as the thoughts of others and to subject all ideas, including their own, to careful scrutiny.

Just as Socrates personified the examined life, the characters in the philosophy for children novels personify a community of inquiry in action. These characters demonstrate the characteristics of good intellectual inquiry, including efforts to be objective, impartial, and relevant as they continually struggle to figure things out. In the novels, intellectual inquiry almost always occurs in a public place with two or more children and/or adults engaged in a conversation about something that is puz-

zling to them. The discussion is usually initiated by a character who encounters a situation that is confusing and seeks help from friends in trying to figure it out. While the problem is usually philosophical in nature, of more significance is the children's manner of coping with it. Naively sharing their sense of wonder, these children demonstrate a willingness to express their most private thoughts; to admit to their own ignorance or bewilderment; to overcome their fears of being different, foolish, or stupid. Such naiveté and candor is refreshing; and the characters offer students in the classroom models who take risks, both publicly and privately, believing that progress can be made in solving the puzzle confronting them. Though progress is made, the quest never ends. The solution to one person's puzzle raises additional questions in the mind of another, and the process of inquiry continues.

Numerous examples of intellectual inquiry occur in the philosophy for children novels. The one presented below appears in Chapter 6 of *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*. Fran Wood and Laura O'Mara are sleeping over at Jill Portos' house. The hour is late and the girls have talked about everything from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* to dreams and death. Eventually their thoughts turn to thinking about thinking and Fran wonders out loud:

"But what's a 'mind?' And how do you know you have one?"

Laura yawned and somehow managed to stretch out and wiggle her toes under the bedclothes at the same time. "I know I've got a mind," she replied, "Just like I know I've got a body."

Jill's father knocked at the door and told the girls it was past midnight and time they were asleep. The girls promised to stop talking (at least Jill did; the others just giggled). But before long they were back on the same subject.

Fran insisted that a person could see and touch his body, but he couldn't see or touch his mind, and how could anyone know his mind was real if he couldn't see or touch it? "When you say 'mind'," Fran concluded, "all you're talking about is your brain."

"There are lots of things that are real, even though we can't see or touch them," Laura objected. "For example, if I go for a swim, is there really some kind of thing called a swim? If I go for a walk or a ride, are there really things called walks or rides?"

"So what are you saying?" Fran asked.

"What I think Laura's saying," said Jill, "is that what we call thinking is something we do, like swimming or walking or riding."



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"That's right," Laura agreed, "that's just what I mean. When I said before I had a mind, I meant that I *mind* things. I mind the telephone, or my baby sister, or just my own business. But 'having a mind' is nothing but 'minding'."

But Fran wasn't happy with the solution Jill and Laura had arrived at. "I agree," she said, "that maybe the mind isn't quite the same thing as the brain. I know I said before it was, but I've changed my mind." Everyone giggled for a while, then Fran went on. "What I mean is, you can't see electricity, but it's real. So why couldn't our thoughts be something electrical in the brain?"

This time it was Jill's mother who told the girls they would have to continue the conversation in the morning.

"Mom," said Jill, "what's a mind?"

Mrs. Portos suspected she was being drawn into a conversation that was already supposed to be finished. But she didn't like to put Jill off, so she said, "When I was your age, Jill, I though the mind was some thin, smokey kind of stuff, like one's breath—"

"Did you think you could see it in cold weather, the way you can see your breath in cold weather?" Jill interrupted.

"No," her mother replied, "I really thought of it as something real but invisible. You couldn't ever see it, but it was where your thoughts were, and your feelings, and your memories and imaginings, and they too were all made of this same thin, filmy stuff."

"Oh," Jill exclaimed, "that's so right! That's exactly what the mind is!"

Mrs. Portos smiled, "Perhaps."

"Well, what else could it be?" Jill demanded.

Mrs. Portos put her hand on Jill's head. "I really don't know," she said. Then, after a moment, she added, "And I'm not just saying that because it's late, and I'd rather not discuss it. It's true — I really don't know. But sometimes I think it's nothing but language."

"Language?" Jill asked.

"When children first begin to talk, they talk to other people," said Mrs. Portos. "When other people aren't around to talk to, the children keep right on talking as if they were. In other words, they start talking to themselves. And they talk to themselves more and more quietly until they can't make sounds at all. That's called thinking."

"And you mean," said Fran, "that at first children would see things only when they were present, but when those things weren't present, the children would remember or imagine them? So the thoughts in our minds are really just the traces of things in our memories?"

"Oh my, Fran, I don't know, I never thought of it quite like that," Mrs. Portos replied.

The conversation continues with Mr. Portos entering the girls' room and contributing to the dialogue, but no definite solution is forthcoming. Still progress has been made. By engaging in a dialogue on a topic that emerges naturally out of conversation, the children gain insights into what the mind is or is not. While it is obvious that children learn from adults, it should be noted that Mrs. Portos, by participating in the dialogue, began to see things a little differently than before. The above excerpt illustrates that while definitive solutions may not be achieved, understanding for both adults and children can be enhanced through dialogue.

In addition to demonstrating the positive results that a community of inquiry can produce, characters in the novels model different styles of thinking in their collective struggle to figure things out. Students in the classroom quickly note that certain characters are risk-takers, while others are more cautious; some are analytical, while others are experimental; and some are empirical, and others are speculative. Students readily grasp that there is no one right way of thinking and that progress is best achieved when individuals possessing different styles of thinking focus on common problems.

Provided with numerous examples of a heterogeneous community of inquiry in action, students in the classroom tend to identify with and emulate characters in the novels. As students in the classroom treat seriously the ideas introduced in or generated by the novels, they are compelled to reflect, to concentrate, to listen closely to others, to assess and evaluate ways of examining an issue that previously never occurred to them. In other words, as they emulate the styles of thinking modeled for them in the novels, students in the classroom perform a whole host of mental activities that are rarely used in most other school activities.

Such activities are grouped together under the catch-all phrase "thinking skills." Like much else that we do, mental skills are perfected only by doing them. While particular acts and skills needed to think well can be identified, thinking well is the selection and coordination of the acts and skills necessary for a particular task. In a sense it is not possible to teach this, since thinking well means thinking for oneself — an activity that no one can or should do for us. But an atmosphere to encourage the recognition, selection, and application of appropriate thinking skills

can be created. As Socrates demonstrated, genuine dialogue assumes a method of inquiry where all ideas and thoughts are scrutinized in the search for greater understanding. The philosophy for children materials seek to revive this Socratic ideal by converting classrooms into communities of inquiry. Through such dialogue, students develop beyond mere recognition of particular thinking skills; they move toward mastery of such skills as they assemble and use them in their reasoned response to matters of importance to them.

## Training Teachers to Use the Philosophy for Children Program

The philosophy for children novels provide excellent models of non-authoritarian philosophical inquiry. While such models are an essential ingredient of a thinking skills curriculum, the role of the classroom teacher is of equal importance. If the philosophy for children materials are to succeed in assisting students in discovering meaning in their lives, teachers must create a classroom atmosphere that encourages philosophical dialogue among students.

Guiding a philosophical discussion is an art that few teachers have mastered. It requires an understanding of when and when not to intervene in the discussion. It requires skill in eliciting views and opinions from students and in helping them to discover the logical implications of their views. Orchestrating a philosophical discussion involves returning to thoughts and points of view volunteered by students, weaving the threads together, and assisting students to understand that their ideas make a difference in their lives. Like Socrates, a teacher of philosophical inquiry must be a gadfly, admonishing students to be intellectual risk-takers, encouraging them to think for themselves, aiding them to discover underlying assumptions, and assisting them in the search for more comprehensive solutions.

Teachers committed to philosophical inquiry can, with practice, develop the skills needed to conduct a philosophical dialogue. But first, they must have retained some of their childlike wonder. They must be intellectually open and honest, curious about as well as critical of the world, knowledgeable but not all-knowing. In addition, they need


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coaching in the art of conducting philosophical inquiry. Teachers who are genuinely committed to philosophical inquiry (not all are) and who respect the opinions of children can, with training, successfully implement the philosophy for children program.

If teachers are to convert their classrooms into communities of inquiry, they must first participate in such a community and experience firsthand the power of dialogue in stimulating thought. During the last decade, Matthew Lipman and his associates at IAPC have conducted numerous one-week and two-week workshops to prepare consultants and teachers for the philosophy for children program. Living together in a retreat-like setting for a week or two, the workshop participants experience, much as children in the classroom do, the development of a community of inquiry. After being coached by a member of the IAPC staff, each participant conducts a dialogue session on a particular chapter of the novels. After the session, staff members point out strengths and weaknesses of the presentation. Generally, this format is followed in preparing both teacher trainers and teachers.

Individual teachers, schools, and school districts interested in learning more about the program should contact the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, New Jersey 07043. With IAPC training consultants now located throughout the nation, it is relatively easy to arrange for a training-consultant to explain and demonstrate the program to parent and teacher groups. These sessions are designed to demonstrate what actually occurs in the classroom by having parents, teachers, and children read aloud and discuss a selection from one of the novels. In this way, interested parents and teachers get a sense of what the program is about and how it works in the classroom. If this initial demonstration generates sufficient interest, a variety of options are available for training.

One model is the intensive one- or two-week workshop, usually conducted during the summer with teachers from a particular school or district. Participants in the workshop read and discuss the novels as a group. The teacher trainer initially models the process, demonstrating how activities and exercises in the accompanying teachers manual should be used to supplement and reinforce the ideas discovered in the

novels. Blending content and methodology, the workshops acquaint teachers with the content of the novels and the process of philosophical inquiry.

While participating in philosophical dialogue is essential, it is not the same as orchestrating a philosophical discussion. Therefore, participants in the workshops are expected to take turns planning and conducting a session that focuses on the ideas generated by a selection from one of the novels. The teacher trainer offers constructive feedback at the conclusion of each presentation. Participants quickly realize that it is not as easy as it looks, but they learn from their own mistakes as well as from those of others. Participants readily empathize with one another; and such empathy, when combined with other shared experiences, contributes to the development of a community of inquiry. Teachers must experience and understand the power of such a community if they expect to convert their classrooms into one.

In addition to the workshop format, teacher training is being conducted in other ways, such as a school inservice program in which teachers attend sessions once or twice a week after school or in the evening. The trainer models the process in much the same way as the workshop format; but early in the training session, teachers are expected to implement the program in their own classrooms. Unlike the workshop format where the training occurs prior to implementation, the inservice approach allows teachers to implement the program immediately under the supervision of a teacher trainer. Such inservice training usually takes place over the course of a semester or year, with the teacher trainer hired as a consultant to a school or school district. While this format offers the advantage of immediate feedback and supervision, the weekly afternoon sessions during a school year make continuity difficult.

Realizing that better-prepared teachers are needed to implement the program, the IAPC has concentrated much of its resources on devising ways to prepare teachers to convert their classrooms into communities of inquiry. Since 1974 the IAPC has provided a one-year inservice training course for almost 1,000 elementary and middle school teachers in the state of New Jersey. IAPC has also trained teachers to implement the program in various projects throughout the country. Having

recruited and trained a small cadre of academic philosophers as training consultants, the IAPC efforts have made it possible for school districts all across the nation to have access to the training necessary to implement the program.

Several colleges and universities offer graduate courses for teachers who wish to implement the philosophy for children program. Montclair State College, in conjunction with IAPC, recently has instituted a Master of Arts in the Teaching of Middle School Philosophy. This M.A.T. in philosophy for children is intended to develop superior teachers capable of integrating the teaching of thinking skills with the content areas. The M.A.T. students take courses in philosophy for children, social theory, psychology, and pedagogy. Ten of the 46 credits needed for the degree consist of student teaching, and each graduate is certified in a discipline other than philosophy.

The Program for the Advancement of Analytic Thinking for Children at Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth was established to prepare Fort Worth teachers to teach philosophy in their classrooms. The program, which serves as the core of Wesleyan's master's degree in philosophical foundations, offers a year-long seminar with teachers meeting for 2½ hours each week to discuss the philosophy for children materials. Tuition is waived for these teachers and six hours of graduate credit is given for participating in the seminars and implementing the philosophy for children program in their elementary classrooms. In three years Wesleyan's program, with a grant from the Fort Worth Fleming Foundation, has prepared more than 130 teachers to implement the philosophy for children program.

The amount of training necessary to implement the philosophy for children program varies. Some teachers grasp the content and process more rapidly than others, but experience suggests that substantial training is needed for the successful implementation of the philosophy for children program. However, training alone is not enough. Unless teachers understand and are committed to philosophical inquiry, no amount of training can transform them into effective philosophy for children teachers. If the commitment is there, the training is available, packaged in a variety of ways to meet the needs of individual teachers, schools, and districts.

## Successes of the Philosophy for Children Program

Empirical evidence suggests that the philosophy for children program significantly enhances the thinking skills of children. The first research conducted on the philosophy for children program occurred at the Rand School in Montclair, New Jersey, in 1971. It was here that Matthew Lipman introduced *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* to a class of economically and racially heterogeneous fifth-graders. Using the California Test of Mental Maturity, pretests and posttests were administered to both Lipman's experimental group and to a control group. According to Martin L. Bierman, director of Public Services for the Montclair Public Schools, after nine weeks the experimental group showed a gain in logical reasoning of 27 months over the comparison group. In addition, the students' reading scores on the Iowa tests were examined prior to and two years after the experiment. Again differences between the two groups proved to be significant, leading Bierman to conclude that "the experiment conducted positively affected the reading scores of the students two-and-a-half years later" (Lipman, 1976).

The Rand experiment demonstrated the ability of the program to get results when taught by a college logic instructor, but are comparable results found when regular classroom teachers implement the program? A 1975 experiment in Newark, New Jersey, conducted by Hope Haas of the Institute for Cognitive Studies at Rutgers University, suggests that the philosophy for children program gets positive results from teachers as well. When reading is stressed, as seemed to be the case in Newark,

the IAPC program is capable of producing significant improvements in reading. When reasoning is stressed, as occurred in the original Rand experiment, improvement in reasoning skills results.

In the Newark experiment, 400 fifth- and sixth-grade students were tested; the students in the experimental group gained an average of eight months in reading ability as compared with five months for the control group. Several classes in the experimental group made dramatic gains, with one class gaining two-and-a-half years in reading ability and another class gaining a year and four months (Lipman et al., 1980).

Beginning in September 1976 and continuing through May 1978, the Educational Testing Service conducted an extensive research evaluation of the philosophy for children program. Involving two New Jersey communities, Newark and Pompton Lakes, the experiment sought to assess the impact of the program in two settings: a large inner-city area and a suburban lower-middle-class area. Results of the experiment revealed significant improvement for the experimental groups in formal reasoning on three of the four grade levels in Newark (the program was implemented in grades 5 through 8). Experimental groups achieved highly significant improvement in creative reasoning in both Newark and Pompton Lakes. In both areas teachers rated the program highly for its favorable impact on students. According to the teachers, students appeared to be more curious, better oriented toward their tasks, more considerate of one another, and better able to reason (Lipman et al., 1980).

Other experiments, including one with emotionally handicapped children at the Devereaux Day School in Scottsdale, Arizona, in 1977, have produced similar results (Simon, 1979). The research has continued with projects in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1978 (Karras, 1979), and Hilo, Hawaii, in 1979 (Higa, 1980). The research discussed above is reported in Matthew Lipman, "Thinking Skills Fostered by the Middle School Philosophy for Children Program," available from IAPC.

Recently, a major philosophy for children project in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was evaluated. Beginning in 1979 in six schools the philosophy for children program was expanded to 15 elementary schools by 1982. Plans were made to expand the program to all fifth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade classrooms in this eastern Pennsylvania school system. With the help of a $62,000 grant from the National Endowment for the

Humanities, more than 3,000 students in Bethlehem are now enrolled in philosophy for children courses.

Anecdotal evidence from the Bethlehem project suggests that both students and teachers have benefited from the project. According to A. Thomas Kartsotis, a middle school principal and leader of the Bethlehem philosophy project, "street kids have blossomed." Adds John Acerra, a sixth-grade teacher at the Lincoln Elementary School, "I have a sixth-grade kid, Ricky, who reads at a second-grade level. But in the philosophy class he has opened up because he knows he will not be told 'no.' He has become more willing to take risks; he has become a more important part of the class." Henry Richards, who has taught the philosophy for children course for three years at Governor Wolf Elementary School, indicates that the program has improved his teaching. Trained with 32 other Bethlehem teachers by members of the IAPC staff, Richards notes that he no longer looks for specific yes or no answers and now refrains from answering his own questions.

Virginia C. Shipman, a senior research psychologist in the Center for Assessment and Research in Human Development at the Educational Testing Service, has evaluated the sixth-grade program in Bethlehem, and her appraisal lends credence to these anecdotal comments. Sampling 750 Bethlehem students from 32 sixth-grade classes in 15 schools, Shipman pretested and posttested these students using Questioning Task 4 (an instrument developed specifically for this program by the Educational Testing Service), as well as other instruments, to assess both formal and informal reasoning skills. Shipman concludes that students in 29 of the 32 Bethlehem classrooms involved in the philosophy for children program showed significant improvement in reasoning skills. According to Shipman, Bethlehem children participating in the philosophy for children program improved their problem-solving skills. Shipman further concludes that this diverse sample of sixth-graders demonstrated significant improvement in both "informal and formal reasoning skills, in their fluency and flexibility of thought, and in their daily and social classroom behaviors" (Shipman 1983).

As was discussed in the last chapter, the philosophy for children program has been implemented in the Fort Worth schools, with area teachers trained at Texas Wesleyan College in Fort Worth. Currently,

more than 2,500 children are exposed to analytic teaching at least once a week. The David K. Sellers Elementary School in Fort Worth is using the philosophy for children materials throughout its K-5 curriculum. A recent evaluation of the Fort Worth project showed improvements in the students' thinking skills (Reed and Henderson, 1981).

A unique aspect of philosophy for children in Fort Worth is its implementation at the Regional Day School for the Deaf. According to Bill Moffatt, principal at the Regional Day School, because hearing-impaired children are not constantly exposed to words, they rarely understand the range of meanings a single word connotes. Philosophy for children expands their horizons by helping them explore all the possibilities. In working on ambiguity with students at the school for the deaf, Ron Rembert, a consultant for the program, notes that they looked at five definitions of the word *hot*. "They were familiar with high temperatures and that was about all. Then we looked at other meanings of hot: spicy, popular, something stolen. Working this way, we hope to make them take the context of what they read or see seriously."

The success of the program at Texas Wesleyan and Fort Worth offers encouragement for others interested in making philosophy for children commonplace. Universities and colleges across the nation are now providing courses to train teachers to use these materials. More significantly, efforts are underway to establish regional centers for the advancement of philosophy for children. The successes to date suggest that philosophy for children is a viable program that, when properly taught, achieves significant positive results.



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## Problems of Philosophy for Children

Substantial teacher training is required to implement the philosophy for children program; but while training is necessary, it is not sufficient for successful implementation. For teachers who have retained a sense of wonder about the world, training can empower them to convert their classrooms into communities of inquiry. For those who do not subscribe to the values on which the program is based, no amount of training is sufficient.

Ideally, philosophy for children should be taught only by teachers who consciously choose to convert their classrooms into communities of inquiry. Realistically, this is not possible if school districts adopt the program and mandate that their teachers participate in the program against their wishes.

Another major problem in implementing the philosophy for children program is funding. In addition to teacher training, the novels must be purchased for the students and the accompanying manuals for teachers. If the program is to be evaluated, test instruments must be purchased, administered, and scored. While philosophy for children is an excellent educational program, it is not inexpensive. Without exception, the most successful projects have been funded by either national, regional, or local foundations.

In addition to these problems, considerable classroom time is needed for developing a genuine philosophical community. Ideally, children in the classroom should be discussing *Harry* or one of the other novels once or twice a week for an entire school year. As already noted, this is not likely to occur in an already crowded school curriculum unless a strong case for the educational value of the program can be made. The

program is generally introduced as part of the reading or language arts curriculum, but it often assumes its own identity as children find it exciting and look forward to "philosophy" time.

Despite these drawbacks, the successes offer reason for optimism. While teachers need assistance in implementing the program, once they are trained they have these skills for the rest of their lives. If it makes them better teachers, as many indicate, the expense is a worthy investment in both their own and their students' future. Making philosophy for children commonplace in our elementary and middle schools is no easy task, but it is worth the effort. Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. As members of a democracy, they need help in becoming more reasonable and reflective human beings. Though not a panacea, philosophy for children is a move in the right direction. It is more than a passing fad; and as our society awakens to its need for a more concerned and reflective citizenry, philosophy for children will play an increasingly important role in the education of the future.

# IAPC Curriculum Materials

*Kio and Gus* by Matthew Lipman ($6.50)

Six-year-old Kio meets Gus, a blind child, while visiting his grandparents' farm. The novel consists of conversations about language, ideas, animals, people, and things. Kio and Gus wonder about such contrasts as make-believe and reality, fear and courage, saying and doing, and truth and beauty. The characters in the novel express interest in the concepts of space and time and the relationship between language and the world. The novel is intended for readers aged 7 to 10.

*Wondering at the World* by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp

This is the instruction manual for *Kio and Gus*.

*Pixie* by Matthew Lipman ($6.50)

Pixie, the main character in the novel, playfully tells a story about making up a story for class. Intended for children in third and fourth grade, this novel is designed to initiate inquiry on the acquisition of meaning. Philosophical puzzles are used to generate diversified classroom discussions, developing children's awareness of logical, social, familial, and aesthetic relationships. *Pixie* introduces young readers to ratios, similies, metaphors, and analogies.

*Looking for Meaning* by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp ($30)

This instruction manual for *Pixie* contains activities to reinforce the

philosophical content of the novel, emphasizing such reasoning skills as generalization, classification, concept development, comparisons, analogies, contradiction, and seriation.

*Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* by Matthew Lipman ($6.50)

As already noted, this novel introduces the techniques of critical thinking and both formal and informal logic by modeling a community of inquiry as students, parents, and teachers begin to think about thinking. This novel has been successfully used in grades 4, 5, and 6.

*Philosophical Inquiry* by Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, and Frederick Oscanyan ($30)

This instruction manual for the *Harry* novel is designed to reinforce reasoning techniques and logic. Exercises and activities are provided for each of the 17 chapters in the novel and assist the instructor in orchestrating the discussions.

*Lisa* by Matthew Lipman ($6.50)

*Lisa*, a sequel to the *Harry* novel, focuses on ethical and social issues such as fairness, naturalness, lies and truth, and the nature of rules and negotiations, with an emphasis on the interrelationship of logic and morality. *Lisa* is appropriate for students in grades 7 to 10.

*Ethical Inquiry* by Matthew Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, and Frederick Oscanyan ($20)

This instruction manual for *Lisa* provides exercises and activities that enable students to operationalize the ideas and reasoning skills introduced in the novel.

*Suki* by Matthew Lipman ($6.50)

*Suki*, also a sequel to the *Harry* novel, follows the characters in the other novels during their freshman year in high school. Harry has difficulty completing his writing assignments because he has nothing to

say. Suki tries to help, though she searches for meaning by writing poetry while Harry tries to discover it by using logic. Their paths converge after the novel discusses such issues as experience and meaning, criteria for the assessment of writing, the relationship between thinking and writing, and the distinction between craft and art.

*Writing: How and Why* by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp ($30)

This instruction manual for *Suki* includes an anthology of poems by and for children. The poems and exercises encourage children to express in writing what matters to them and helps them to distinguish good writing from bad.

*Mark* by Matthew Lipman ($6.50)

Mark is accused of vandalizing the school and is arrested. As his friends try to prove his innocence, topics such as the nature of bureaucracy, the function of law, individual freedom versus societal demands, and alternative concepts of justice are discussed.

*Social Inquiry* by Matthew Lipman ($30)

This instruction manual for *Mark* provides information and exercises designed to expose students to issues that confront any society and to the basic philosophical questions that each issue raises. *Mark* and *Social Inquiry* are ideal for a high school civics or American government class.

These materials are available from the First Mountain Foundation, P. O. Box 196, Montclair, New Jersey 07042.

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An in-depth, readable account of the beliefs and ideas behind the philosophy for children program. Essential reading for individuals seeking greater understanding of the program.

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A delightful account of children's willingness to playfully enter the world of ideas.

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